



December 15, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Weisz and Members of the Health Care Committee:

My name is Megan Houn, Director of Government Relations at BCBSND and I am pleased to introduce my colleague Krystal Wheeler Dennis, Director of Pharmacy Operations for BCBSND to share our testimony regarding BCBSND's medication optimization program management.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND), in conjunction with Prime Therapeutics, takes an active role in the clinical management of medications. The clinical management of medications helps improve the healthcare of North Dakotans, contain costs for members, and improve overall total healthcare spend.

1. Medication Therapy Management (MTM)

- a. Medication therapy management (MTM) are programs that optimize therapeutic outcomes by providing resources to enhance medication regimens.
- b. Medication therapy management services are provided by health care providers, often retail pharmacists.
- c. Members are reviewed to identify those that may be eligible for services. When a member is identified, members are connected with local pharmacists to provide targeted opportunities. Pharmacists are then reimbursed for this interaction.
- d. Examples of services can include:
  - i. helping members overcome barriers to adherence
  - ii. address gaps in therapy
  - iii. educate on medications and disease states
  - iv. reduce unnecessary or potentially harmful therapy
  - v. assess for adverse effects
- e. In 2020, BCBSND had over 17,000 claims processed via the MTM program. Roughly 40% of those claims were for a comprehensive medication review for members with complex medical conditions including 3+ disease states and 4+ chronic medications.
- f. The comprehensive medication review program helps focus on members who have some of the most complex disease states and take multiple medications achieve better overall health outcomes alongside their pharmacists and providers.

2. Quality Based Performance Program

- a. BCBSND, in conjunction with Prime Therapeutics, implemented a new innovative program to improve member adherence outcomes beginning January 2021.
- b. The program focuses on improving quality of care and overall health outcomes for members by improving medication adherence in key categories.
- c. The program measures are adherence-based within the following medication categories:
  - i. Hypertension
  - ii. Cholesterol (statin medications)

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- iii. Oral diabetic medications
- d. All contracted pharmacies with eligible membership can participate in the program and receive incentive payments for achieving defined adherence measures.
- e. Adherence rates for the first half of 2021 show individual measure improvement ranging from 6% - 10%. This program is in the early stages with limited data.
- f. BCBSND intends to continue collaboration on the measures within this program as well as explore new opportunities to grow the value-based care model.
- 3. Preventive Drug Lists/Value Based Design Drug Lists
  - a. Preventive drug lists are utilized to prevent disease onset or recurrence with the intent to maintain health by reducing or eliminating member cost share. The goal is to improve adherence to medications, keep members healthy, and possibly lower total health care costs long term.
  - b. Lists are made with guidance from the IRS to ensure eligibility to meet preventive measures. Today the lists include drugs that help prevent disease states such as diabetes, heart-related conditions, and asthma to name a few.
  - c. BCBSND added these lists to standard products over the past few years. Most standard products have a preventive drug list or value-based design drug list associated with the plan, often with a \$5/month medication copay.
  - d. The addition of these lists as a benefit enhancement is important to help members obtain medications at an affordable price and improve overall adherence ultimately improving member health.
- 4. Guided Health
  - a. GuidedHealth is a Prime Therapeutics sponsored program that aims to help members and prescribers make better medication management decisions by utilizing integrated data and evidence based clinical policies to identify opportunities and act when needed
  - b. The program improves outcomes, increases safety, and lowers the total cost of care
- 5. Utilization Management
  - a. Utilization management programs assist the health care community in helping improve medicine for members. Utilization management programs do this by ensuring members are receiving the correct medication for a diagnosis, reducing waste, and improving member safety all while keeping medicine affordable.
  - b. There are three pillars to utilization management:
    - i. Prior authorization
    - ii. Step Therapy
    - iii. Quantity Limits
- 6. Drug Utilization Review
  - a. BCBSND and Prime Therapeutics offer Drug Utilization Review programs to screen prescriptions at the point of sale for potential medication problems.
  - b. If a claim is flagged in the system, a message is displayed online for a pharmacist to identify the potential conflict prior to the member receiving the medication.

- c. There are numerous screening activities including drug-drug interactions, high dose alerts, opioid use alerts, and duplicate therapy to name a few.
- d. This is an important tool for pharmacies as members can utilize multiple pharmacies and may not always disclose information about additional medications they have filled at other pharmacies.

7. Biosimilars

- a. Biosimilars are FDA approved versions of a brand name product which are considered interchangeable. Medications in the biosimilar category are typically injectable medications.
- b. Biosimilar availability in a variety of disease states is expected to increase significantly in the marketplace in the next few years. Overall promotion of these products may encourage overall cost savings to the healthcare system.
- c. BCBSND will continue to monitor and evaluate these products to understand how they may best fit for our members as well as how they may help lower overall total healthcare costs.

BCBSND continues to partner with Prime Therapeutics to evaluate the products and clinical services offered with many of the programs listed above. We want to ensure that members obtain the medications they need to feel better and live well while focusing on cost-saving opportunities to keep health care costs low. Managing medication utilization is a key part of this focus.